



## **MEMORANDUM**

**May 24, 2011**

**TO: CENTER FOR TOBACCO POLICY AND ORGANIZING**

**FROM: PAUL GOODWIN**  
**Goodwin Simon Strategic Research**

**RE: Key Findings from Statewide Tobacco Retail Policy Survey**

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### **Introduction And Methodology**

The Center for Tobacco Policy and Organizing asked Goodwin Simon Strategic Research to conduct a telephone survey of California voters to assess reaction to a proposed local tobacco retailers licensing ordinance, and to various possible provisions ("plug-ins") that a licensing ordinance might contain.

We completed a total of 600 telephone interviews with California voters between April 20 and May 1, 2011. The margin of error for statewide results is plus or minus 4% at a 95% confidence level. That is, if this survey were to be repeated exactly as it was originally conducted, then 95 out of 100 times the responses from the sample (expressed as proportions) would be within 4% of the actual population proportions.

Our sample frame included both land lines and wireless numbers. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish; about 8% of all interviews were completed in Spanish. To qualify for the sample, a voter had to have participated in the November, 2008 election or one of the more recent statewide elections. About 81% of all registered voters in California qualified for this sample.

### **More than Eight in Ten Support Local Tobacco Licensing Ordinance**

Our survey of California voters shows very strong support for a local retail tobacco licensing ordinance. In fact, fully 83% of California's voters would support *"requiring store owners in your area to get a license if they want to sell cigarette and other tobacco products."* Just 14% would oppose such a requirement.

**Question Wording:** *Many cities and counties in California require store owners to get a license to sell cigarettes and other tobacco products. To reduce youth smoking, the license requirement imposes strong penalties on stores that sell cigarettes to minors, and also increases enforcement of this law. In general, would you support or oppose requiring store owners in your area to get a license if they want to sell cigarettes and other tobacco products?*

Even among smokers, there is nearly two-to-one support for a tobacco licensing ordinance, at 60% to 34%. Among non-smokers, support for a licensing requirement is at 86% with just 12% opposed. Support among Black voters is at 76%, among white voters support is at 81%, and among Latinos and Asian voters we find 92% in favor.

### **Eight in Ten Support Requiring Retailers to Pay a Fee for the License**

We also found very little resistance to the idea of charging retailers a fee for a tobacco retail license, with the funds used to enforce the law against selling cigarettes to minors. Eighty percent would support a fee of “a few hundred dollars a year” for the license if the funds were used for this purpose. Only 19% would oppose this fee.

**Question Wording:** *To get a license to sell tobacco products, store owners would pay a fee of a few hundred dollars a year. Money from that fee would be used to enforce the law against selling cigarettes to minors. Is [this] something you would be inclined to strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose?*

Strong support for a fee is bipartisan: 70% of Republican voters, 83% of Democrats, and 85% of nonpartisan voters would favor this fee.

### **Nearly 90% Support Revoking Tobacco License for Repeated Sales to Minors**

An even higher proportion, 88%, would support suspending the tobacco license of any retail store that “repeatedly violates the law against selling cigarettes to minors.” Just 10% would oppose this.

**Question wording:** *Repeated violations of the law against selling cigarettes to minors would result in the store having its license to sell tobacco products suspended. Is [this] something you would be inclined to strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose?*

This level of support for a policy proposal, and especially one imposing a fee on a respectable business, is truly unusual and reflective of the deep commitment of American voters to reducing youth smoking.

### Forty-Five Percent Say It Is Easy for Teens to Buy Cigarettes at Local Retail Stores

One factor that appears to be associated with support for a licensing ordinance is a belief that it is easy for local teenagers to buy cigarettes at local retail stores. Statewide, 45% said it was easy for teens to buy cigarettes, with 31% who said it was hard and 24% who were not sure. Among those supporting the ordinance, 46% say teens have easy access to cigarettes and 30% say it is hard for them to get cigarettes. Among opponents of the ordinance, those figures are 38% easy and 40% hard – so opponents are less likely to feel that teens are already getting cigarettes in stores.

*Question wording: To begin, how easy or hard do you think it is for teenagers under age 18 to buy cigarettes at local retail stores in your area?*

### Five Plug-Ins Earn Strong Support for Voters

We also tested plug-ins that could be part of a local retail tobacco licensing ordinance. Three of them were extremely popular with voters, as shown in the table below, with two others earning strong but somewhat more divided responses:

RESPONSE TO PLUG-INS	Support	Oppose
Require tobacco warning signs to be posted	82%	16%
No tobacco sales within 1000 feet of school	73%	25%
No tobacco sales where meth pipes are sold	66%	25%
500 foot distance between stores selling tobacco	57%	38%
No sales of individual little cigars	54%	38%

The reaction by voter groups to these plug-ins followed a clear and consistent pattern.

- Support divides by gender, with women more likely to favor the plug-ins than men.
- Support divides by party, with Democrats and nonpartisan voters more likely to favor the plug-ins than GOP voters.
- Support divides by race, with minorities and especially Latinos more likely to support the plug-ins, while white voters (and especially white men) are less likely to favor them.
- Support often but not always divides by parental status, with parents more likely to favor the plug-ins than nonparents.

- Support divides most widely by smoking status, with nonsmokers much more supportive than the 11% who tell us they are current smokers.

**Plug-In 1: 82% Support Tobacco Warning Signs Inside Stores Selling Tobacco**

The most popular plug-in we tested would require stores to post tobacco warning signs to be eligible for a license. Fully 82% of California voters would support “requiring any store selling tobacco products to post warning signs about the dangers of tobacco use.” Just 16% opposed this plug-in.

*Question Wording: What about requiring any store selling tobacco products to post warning signs about the dangers of tobacco use? These warning signs would include graphic images and written warnings detailing the dangers of tobacco use, and information on how to quit. Would you be inclined to support, or to oppose, requiring stores that sell tobacco products to post warning signs?*

We then tested responses to two possible reasons to require warning signs in stores selling tobacco. After each statement we read, we asked respondents if they felt it was a good reason, or not a good reason, to support this requirement. We also tested responses to possible reasons to NOT require warning signs in stores.

As shown below, both positive statements – one about reducing teen use of tobacco, and one about how such warnings really work in reducing smoking -- were received about equally by respondents. We note also how much more effective the positive statements were than the reasons to not require the signs. Regarding the latter, a concern about excess government intrusion earned a slightly stronger response than concern about infringing on the rights of retailers.

<b>(POSITIVE) Reasons to Require Warning Signs</b>	<b>Good Reason</b>	<b>Not Good</b>
These warning signs would encourage people to quit using tobacco and would help prevent young people from starting	83%	16%
We know that warnings really work in helping people quit using tobacco. So, they should be visible before people buy tobacco products, not just on the package after they buy them	83%	16%
<b>(NEGATIVE) Reasons to Not Require Warning Signs</b>	<b>Good Reason</b>	<b>Not Good</b>
These signs would require retailers to post negative information about the very products they are trying to sell. That is just not right	41%	57%
These warning labels are already on the tobacco packages. Adults can make up their own minds without being forced by government to see even more intrusive information	51%	47%

**Plug-In 2: 73% Support Prohibiting the Sale of Tobacco within 1,000 Feet of a School**

By nearly a three to one ratio (73% in favor and 25% opposed), California voters support a 1,000 foot buffer zone around schools within which tobacco could not be sold.

*Question wording: What if this law prohibited any business located within one thousand feet of a school in your area from selling tobacco products? Does this sound like something you would generally support, or oppose?*

We then tested responses to two possible reasons to prohibit stores located within 1,000 feet of a school from selling tobacco. After each statement we read, we asked respondents if they felt it was a good reason, or not a good reason, to support this requirement. We also tested possible reasons to allow stores located near schools to continue selling tobacco products.

As shown below, both positive statements – one about reducing illegal sales to minors, and one about reducing youth smoking -- were equally influential with voters. The negative statement about excess government involvement was considerably more influential than the statement about the economic impact of such a law.

<b>(POSITIVE) Reasons to Prohibit Tobacco Sales Near Schools</b>	<b>Good Reason</b>	<b>Not Good</b>
Studies show that when cigarettes are sold where children congregate, illegal sales to minors go up. Prohibiting the sale of cigarettes near schools will reduce illegal sales to minors (N = 301)	79%	19%
Studies show that the location of tobacco retailers near schools can lead to higher teen smoking rates. Prohibiting the sales of cigarettes close to schools can reduce youth smoking (N = 299)	79%	19%
<b>(NEGATIVE) Reasons to Continue Allowing Tobacco Sales Near Schools</b>	<b>Good Reason</b>	<b>Not Good</b>
It's wrong for government to tell stores that sell tobacco products where they can and cannot do business. That gives too much power to government	48%	50%
A law like this could hurt the economy – it would cost us jobs during this recession, when we can least afford it	35%	60%

We also found that a solid majority of voters believe this law should apply to existing stores: 57% say that stores currently within 1,000 feet of a school should not be allowed to sell tobacco, with just 35% who say tobacco sales should be allowed in existing stores near schools.

*Question wording:* What do you think should happen with existing stores that are currently selling tobacco products but are located within one thousand feet of a school? Do you think such stores should continue to be allowed to sell tobacco products? Or do you think they should no longer be allowed to sell tobacco products if they are within one thousand feet of a school?

### **Plug-In 3: Two of Three Voters Say That Stores Selling Meth Pipes Should Not Be Allowed to Sell Tobacco**

By well over a two-to-one margin, voters say that stores that sell meth pipes should not be given a tobacco license. Sixty-six percent say that stores selling meth pipes should be prohibited from selling tobacco products, with 25% who would allow such stores to sell tobacco.

*Question wording:* OK, some stores sell pipes that are used for smoking meth. Should stores in your area that sell these meth pipes be allowed to sell tobacco products as well? Or, should stores that sell meth pipes be prohibited from selling tobacco products?

### **Plug-in 4: 57% Favor a 500-Foot Distance between Stores Selling Tobacco**

We asked voters about requiring stores selling tobacco to be at least 500 feet apart. We found that 57% favored this plug-in, with 38% opposed.

*Question wording:* What about limiting the number of stores that can sell tobacco products in any given area? So stores that sell tobacco products would have to be at least 500 feet apart? Does this sound like something you would be inclined to support, or to oppose?

While this plug-in was very popular among those who favor a tobacco licensing ordinance, opponents of an ordinance really disliked it. That is, among those who support an ordinance, 59% favored this plug-in and 32% opposed it. But among licensing opponents, 31% favored the plug-in and 65% opposed it, much higher resistance than we found with most of the other plug-ins.

**Plug-in 5: 54% Support Prohibiting the Sales of Individual Little Cigars and Cigarillos**

A small majority (54%) of California voters would support a plug-in that prohibited the sales of individual little cigars and cigarillos. Thirty-eight percent would oppose this plug-in, with strong opposition in particular from smokers.

*Question wording: At present, stores are not allowed to sell individual cigarettes. What about also prohibiting the sale of individual little cigars and cigarillos? Does this sound like something you would be inclined to support, or to oppose?*

We then tested the impact of two statements in support of such a prohibition on the sale of little cigars and cigarillos, and two statements opposing a ban. Both positive statements – one about reducing youth smoking and the other about reducing minority smoking rates – earned fairly similar responses, with the youth smoking message being slightly more influential at a 90% confidence level. There was no difference in response to the two negative messages: one about this requirement being a burden on consumers and the other about excess government control.

<b>(POSITIVE) Reasons to Prohibit Sales of Individual Cigars/Cigarillos</b>	<b>Good Reason</b>	<b>Not Good</b>
Individual little cigars and cigarillos are inexpensive and marketed to young smokers to hook them on tobacco. Eliminating individual sales would discourage their use among young people and reduce youth smoking	70%	27%
Little cigars and cigarillos are developed and marketed primarily to African Americans and Latinos to get them hooked on tobacco products. Eliminating single sales of these products can help reduce smoking rates among these groups	65%	30%
<b>(NEGATIVE) Reasons to Continue Allowing Sales of Individual Cigars/Cigarillos</b>	<b>Good Reason</b>	<b>Not Good</b>
These products are used less frequently than cigarettes, so requiring them to be bought in packages is a needless hassle for the customer	50%	45%
It is wrong for the government to tell retailers how to sell certain products. This gives the government too much power	50%	46%

## **Smoking Status**

Eleven percent of voters told us that they have smoked tobacco in the past week. This includes 15% of men and 8% of women, including 16% of white men and 18% of Democratic men. Sixteen percent of voters who are apartment dwellers are current smokers, compared to 9% of those who live in single-family homes.

These numbers do seem to track publically available data for all residents of California, as reported by TobaccoFreeCA.com. Those numbers (as of 2006) are slightly higher than what we are finding in this survey, but we would expect smoking rates to be lower among voters given the higher income and education levels of voters compared to the general population.

## **Conclusions**

The two key conclusions from the survey are:

- The idea of a retail tobacco licensing ordinance is very popular with voters across the state, and across all partisan, racial, and other demographic divides. There are also several overwhelmingly popular plug-ins that should be part of every local licensing ordinance.
- The message matters. By placing this licensing ordinance in the context of preventing teen smoking and enforcing laws against sales to minors, advocates can effectively counter any “big government” objections that opponents of a retail tobacco licensing ordinance may raise.

Thus, we expect that the results of this poll will help reassure policymakers throughout the state that support for a tobacco retail licensing ordinance, plus appropriate plug-ins, will make not only for good public health policy, but also for good politics.